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WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 10/20/08

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ARTICLES:

(1) Aso eyes new legislation to dispatch MSDF ships to waters off Somalia as anti-piracy measure

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 18, 2008

In a meeting of the Antiterrorism Special Committee in the House of Representatives yesterday, Prime Minister Taro Aso said he would like to study a proposal for the dispatch of Maritime Self-Defense Force escort ships to pirate-infested waters off Somalia in Africa to guard commercial freighters and other ships from possible attacks by pirates. He also has new legislation in mind.

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) member Akihisa Nagashima made the proposal. In response, Aso expressed a positive view, saying: "The act itself of armed warships cruising would have a deterrent effect. The ruling coalition is ready to discuss the possibility with the opposition camp." The possibility of maritime patrol action by P3C

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patrol planes may also be taken up as an agenda item.

As for the legal grounds for the dispatch of MSDF escort ships to waters off Somalia, Japan will have no other way but to depend on a provision under the Self-Defense Force Law pertaining to the issuance of an order for maritime patrol action.

The issuance of such an order is limited only to special cases in which some action must be taken to protect human lives or assets at sea. The provision is premised on action in waters near Japan. A government source said: "If MSDF vessels are dispatched overseas for a long period of time to guard other countries' vessels, new legislation will become necessary."

Aso replied to a question by reporter last night: "Assume that two ships are attacked. If Japan helps only a Japanese ship without reaching out a helping hand to the other ship, the international community will not understand Japan's action." He thus indicated a willingness to look into new legislation if necessary in order to enable MSDF vessels to guard other countries' ships.

In the meeting, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone also expressed his eagerness about new legislation, saying: "We would like to discuss a legal framework to control piracy." Even so, some point out that Japan will have to ease its weapon-use standard in order to enable MSDF members to counterattack pirates, so this issue may trigger controversy.

(2) Prime Minister Aso to attend APEC summit starting on 22nd, may meet with U.S. and Chinese presidents

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 18, 2008

Prime Minister Taro Aso decided on Oct. 18 to attend the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC), which will be held for two days from Nov. 22. Aso plans to meet separately with the top leaders of major countries, including the United States, China and Russia, on the sidelines of the APEC meeting. He has judged that it is necessary for him to take part in a positive manner in an international meeting amid the global financial crisis.

Aso has looked into the possibility of dissolving the House of Representatives in early November and calling a snap election on

Nov. 30. While closely watching the moves of the financial market, he will make a final decision. If a general election is held on Nov. 30, the official campaign for the election should be kicked off on Nov. 18. If so, it will be unusual for a prime minister to go overseas during an election campaign.

The total gross domestic product of the APEC member countries accounts for about 60 PERCENT of the entire world's GDP. It is certain for the APEC to discuss the U.S.-originated global financial crisis, in addition to economic integration, which is a major conventional issue for the APEC. Therefore, Aso, who attaches priority to economic measures, predicts that the APEC conference would be a good opportunity for him to display his political presence to the world.

(3) Japan elected to nonpermanent UNSC seat, to accelerate effort for bid for permanent seat

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 18, 2008

Japan was elected before dawn on Oct. 18 to a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council and will serve in that capacity from next January. Five nonpermanent seats, the terms of which expire at the end of this year, were up for reelection. With the election of Japan, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone released a statement welcoming the victory: "This proves that Japan is highly regarded in the international community for its many years of achievements and stances in the United Nations. Further contributions are expected from Japan by the international community."

Referring to government-to-government talks on reform of the UNSC, which will start by next February, Nakasone expressed Japan's determination to become a permanent UNSC member by fulfilling its role as a nonpermanent member in a positive manner.

Judging that it would be necessary for it to win by a wide margin in the UN election, Japan actively approached many countries to garner their votes. Since Japan won the votes that largely exceeded the number necessary for victory, Foreign Minister Nakasone expects this will give momentum to Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat.

(4) Foreign Minister Nakasone: No change in Japan's policy of giving priority to abduction issue

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
October 17, 2008

The U.S. government's decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism was not a total surprise. The United States had said that it would remove the North from its list of states sponsoring terrorism if Pyongyang cooperated on the verification of its nuclear programs. I assumed that (the United States) would do so soon or later.

The U.S. State Department spokesman has explained the effect of the delisting is a "symbolic thing." The reason is because the United States will continue such measures on North Korea as the ban on assistance and the control of exports and imports. Although some say that North Korea will benefit in financial terms, the U.S. government has decided to oppose financing North Korea by the World Bank and other financial institutions. Japan, too, will probably oppose it.

What's important from now on is to carry out effective verification of North Korea's nuclear report and to move ahead with the denuclearization of that country. To that end, it is necessary to adopt a document on the verification at the Six-Party Talks. We must deal with the issue in cooperation with the countries concerned.

Japan will not take part in an international effort to provide North Korea with economic and energy assistance, including the supplying of heavy oil, as long as there is no improvement in Japan-DPRK relations, including the issue of abductions of Japanese nationals.

Relevant countries understand the fact that Japan has placed importance on the abduction issue. President George W. Bush, too, is very concerned about the abductees. He has said that Washington continues to cooperate with Japan. The Japanese government will negotiate with North Korea in a conventional manner.

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Japan is, however, aware of the importance of support for Pyongyang's abandonment of its nuclear programs. Japan provided 500,000 dollars for surveillance activities that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has conducted in North Korea. Japan will consider how to contribute to the North's abandonment of its nuclear ambitions, while consulting with other countries.

(5) Financial, economic crisis -- what should be done now?: Kazumasa Iwata calls for additional measures that will spur structural change

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
October 20, 2008

-- The financial crisis gripping the U.S. and Europe will likely work as downward pressure on the global economy. What is your view on that?

"The economies of Japan, the U.S. and European countries will slow down after the July-September quarter this year. The economies of China and Brazil are solid. Some say that this is the G-3 recession involving the U.S., Europe and Japan."

Deflationary risk

"The Bank of International Settlements (BIS) in its July report pointed out that though the domestic economy is facing an inflationary risk, there will appear an inflationary risk, if the economy takes a downturn due to the protracted turmoil on the financial market. Should that occur, demand would sharply drop, causing a deflationary risk. Crude oil prices have fallen recently. In my view, a deflationary risk has emerged after the collapse of Lehman Brothers."

-- The dominant view is that the Japanese economy has entered a recessionary phase.

"According to the Bank of Japan's (BOJ) 'Tankan' survey of business confidence, the confidence index for major manufacturing companies moved into the negative column for the first time in five years and three months. The margin of the decline is smaller than that in past recessionary phases. The supply and demand index on the labor market is not excessive. However, it does not fully reflect the situation after the collapse of Lehman Brothers. There is fear that the Japanese economy will remain in a slump for a long period of time."

-- How do you assess international cooperative steps?

"It was good that the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of Seven Nations has mapped out the action program and proposed increasing capital injection into financial institutions using public money, in the sense that they made clear their sense of crisis. It is also praiseworthy that Japan proposed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide fund aid to emerging countries. However, the procedures for capital injections into financial institutions using public money are left up to each country to work out. The U.S. is lagging behind European countries in terms of providing financial assistance to banks."

-- When do you think the financial turmoil in the U.S. end?

"The U.S. housing market has triggered the turmoil. Excessive

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financing amounting to the 20 PERCENT -30 PERCENT of the GDP have given rise to bad loans. S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Indexes, a

representative housing price index, have fallen 21 PERCENT from the level of the peak period of the summer in 2006. Given futures indexes, those indexes will drop another 15 PERCENT by early 2010. The housing market will not recover before fiscal 2009."

-- Will the long-term slump like Japan experienced after the collapse of the asset-inflated bubble economy continue in the U.S.?

"Japan's land prices continued dropping for 15 years. If what is suggested by the Case-Shiller Home Price Indexes is correct, the decline of the housing market in the U.S. will continue for a fairly shorter period than in Japan.

"However, unlike Japan, asset-inflated bubble economies have kept occurring in the U.S. In 2000, the IT-inflated bubble economy collapsed. And yet, housing prices rose between 1997 and 2006. Commodity prices, mainly crude oil prices, kept dropping, even after housing prices took a downward turn. Even now, you never know where a bubble economy might occur. It is very difficult to deal with this problem."

Strict asset assessment needed

-- What is important in containing the financial crisis?

"It is necessary to strictly examine assets held by financial institutions before injecting public money. If public money is injected into troubled financial institutions without full examination of the size of losses caused by deterioration in asset value, losses would continue to snowball. As a result, it becomes uncertain whether financial institutions that received public money can start on a recovery track.

"In Japan, the Resolution and Collection Corporation purchased bad loans. In the end, it purchased more than 90 PERCENT of bad loans. In purchasing assets from banks, it is most important to do so, based on appropriate prices that can gain tax payers' understanding."

-- What policy will Japan need?

"It is important for the government to change the economic structure from the mid- to long-term perspective, instead of coming up with short-term demand-boosting measures. It is also imperative for it to introduce a tax system that can boost workers' incentive to work and encourage companies and households to make efforts to save energy and resources.

"Regarding monetary policy, it is important for the government to find the most appropriate level of policy interest rate, while carefully determining the rate of price increases and economic growth for the next one to two years, in particular, one year's ahead. The BOJ is urged to make a clear-cut decision."

Kazumasa Iwata, executive director of Cabinet Office Socioeconomic Research Center: Entered the former Economic Planning Agency in 1970. After entering academia, he once served as a professor at Tokyo University. He served as deputy Bank of Japan governor in 2003, after serving as a Cabinet Office director general. Once voted against then BOJ Governor Toshihiko Fukui's proposal for hiking an

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interest rate. 62 years old.

(6) State Minister Noda finding it difficult to show her face in dealing with frozen green beans case; Her own comments supporting multilevel marketing also hurt her

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
October 20, 2008

Questions in favor of the multilevel marketing industry (pyramid sales) supposedly raised at a Diet session by Seiko Noda, the State Minister in charge of Consumer Affairs, who is supposed to take the lead in consumer administration, will likely have an unavoidable impact on the outcome of proposed legislation to establish a

consumer affairs agency. Noda has failed to make known her presence as a state minister in dealing with issue of tainted frozen green beans from China. It has also been revealed that a multilevel marketing company bought fundraising party tickets from her. Her own vow made immediately after her reappointment in the Aso cabinet to "tackle such matters as food safety and consumer administration" appears to have got off to a bad start.

At a press conference on October 17, Noda ruled out stepping down over the issue of having ties to with the multilevel marketing industry, Noda said she raised questions only once (at a Diet session) and has not received donation, stressing the difference from the lawmaker Yukichi Maeda who left the DPJ. In addition, Noda disclosed the fact that the Amway Japan, Ltd., representatives of whom she met before raising questions (at the Diet session) in 1996, had purchased her fundraising party tickets worth 160,000 yen three times since 2002. Noda indicated she will return the money to the company.

However, Noda can hardly escape being criticized for her questions in favor of the industry. Her question posed an objection to tightening control over the multilevel marketing by saying that it was regrettable that a growing market of good quality products was shrinking. The opposition parties are expected to severely grill her on the issue, once deliberations on the Consumers Agency-related bills begins.

Meanwhile, Noda has not made any remarkable comment on the frozen green beans issue to which the MHLW and the MFA are mainly responding. Entrusted by the then PM Fukuda, Noda devised countermeasures against the illegal resale of contaminated rice in September after making a fuss, holding a meeting after meeting every consecutive day. This time, however, she is sitting by and watching, as she herself has been affected by the multilevel marketing issue.

(7) Jiyu Rengo fails to return 7.2 billion yen in loan from Tokushukai; Money might have been political donations in actuality

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged slightly)
October 20, 2008

It has become clear that the political group Jiyu Rengo (Liberal League) led by former Lower House lawmaker Torao Tokuda, 70, is 7.26 billion yen in debt to the medical corporation Tokushukai group, for which Tokuda also serves as chairman of board of directors. Chances are slim for Jiyu Rengo, which has lost its status as a political party and has no special assets, to return the money to the

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Tokushukai group. As such, the loans to the political group are likely to become political donations. The Tokushukai group and Jiyu Rengo share not only Tokuda but also many other executives. Such an approach is possible because the Political Funds Control Law has no regulations on borrowing.

Quantitative restrictions toothless

Jiyu Rengo's failure to return the huge amount of money to the Tokushukai group would eventually be tantamount to political donations. Formal political donations are subject to various restrictions, such as ceilings on amounts. Money provided in the pretext of loans is free from such restrictions, however. The approach of turning loans into donations would effectively make the quantitative restrictions toothless.

Jiyu Rengo is in debt to two companies in the Tokushukai group -- one of the largest medical groups in the nation based in Kita Ward, Osaka City, with over 260 hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes -- and their board members. The two companies in question are International Medical Lease (IML), a medical equipment leasing company based in Osaka City, and International Hospital Services (IHS), a real-estate leasing company in Osaka City. Both of them do business mainly with hospitals affiliated with Tokushukai.

According to its political funding report for fiscal 2007, Jiyu

Rengo borrowed a total of 7.065 billion yen from IML, head and local offices combined. It also borrowed 88 million yen from IHS and 110 million yen from their board directors.

Jiyu Rengo's predecessor was an independent lawmakers' policy group established in 1990. It became a political party in 1994. During Tokuda's four terms as a Lower House lawmaker and as its head, Jiyu Rengo fielded many celebrity candidates for elections. The group temporarily lost all its Diet seats, but it became eligible to receive political subsidies as a result of garnering over 2 PERCENT of votes nationwide in the 1998 and 2001 Upper House elections. Torao Tokuda retired as party head in September 2005 because of illness, handing the post to his second son, Takeshi Tokuda, 37, representing Lower House Kagoshima Constituency No. 2. Takeshi Tokuda left the party and joined the Liberal Democratic Party in November 2006. Although Torao Tokuda, who was still recuperating, came back to head the group, it failed to field any candidates for the July 2007 Upper House election, thereby becoming ineligible to receive political subsidies. At present, the group is unable to receive either corporate donations or political subsidies.

Jiyu Rengo treasurer and Tokushukai group secretary general Katsuyuki Noso gave this account: The borrowed money was used for election campaigns to disseminate Jiyu Rengo policy. Liking it to a corporation, it is true that (Jiyu Rengo) has become unable to raise funds, but the practice is not illegal. (Jiyu Rengo) would not have been able to conduct such election campaigns if it weren't for Torao Tokuda. The Tokushukai group has been generating earnings independently and spending reserve capabilities for political activities. Political activities are necessary in order to disseminate the importance of what the state does not do, such as medical services at remote areas and isolated islands. In terms of a company, the funds correspond to advertisement expenses, and in light of the size of Tokushukai's earnings, the amount cannot said to be huge.

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(8) Former secretary of LDP lawmaker Kurata involved in bringing in 300 Filipino women to worked in pubs in Japan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 25) (Full)
October 20, 2008

A former secretary of Senior Vice Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications Masatoshi Kurata (LDP member elected in the Tokai region proportional representation bloc) was found to have allegedly been involved in making arrangements for Filipino women to illegally work in Japan. In this scandal, Shizuoka Prefectural Police has found that the secretary and others had dispatched such women to five shady bars across the nation. Upon denying an interview with the Tokyo Shimbun the allegation that his deeds were illegal, the former secretary said: "I made arrangements to enable about 300 Filipinos to visit Japan over the past two years as of this September."

According to an investigation by the prefectural police, the women worked in bars in Aoi-ku, Shizuoka City, in Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Toyohashi City, and in Utsunomiya City, in addition to one called Class-Metz in Hamamatsu City. In that bar, the owner and four employees were arrested on suspicion of violating the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law (encouraging illegal work) and another law.

The former secretary and others dispatched the Filipino women who had entered Japan on short-term visas to the five bars through two organizations in which the former secretary serves as director general - Mirai Charity Organization and MIRAI - both located in Aoi-ku, Shizuoka Prefecture. The two organizations started dispatching Filipino women to pubs around October 2006. The women worked in the bars for several months on average.

The women performed dances in shows which the organizers called charity concerts designed to support disaster reconstruction and chatted with customers during intermissions. The women were supplied with 1,500 yen as daily food allowance. They also received tips from

customers.

The Shizuoka Police charges that the women's performances were not for charity but came under the category of working illegally.

(9) GOJ to offer 450-billion yen loan to India, largest ever for single project, to fund construction of freight railway

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
October 18, 2008

The Japanese government has firmed up its policy intention to grant an approximately 450-billion yen loan to India for the construction of a freight railway connecting New Delhi, the capital of India, and Mumbai, a commercial city. This would be the largest yen loan ever granted by Japan for a single project. The project will be agreed on at a summit meeting between prime ministers Aso and Singh on October 22. The loan aims at backing Japanese companies advancing into a major market (of India) with a population of 1.1 billion through the construction of railway infrastructure.

India is planning on the construction of a dedicated freight railway between New Delhi and Mumbai (1,468 km) with an expected opening in 2015. The yen loan is to cover an about 918-km section between

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Rewari in the suburbs of New Delhi and Vadodara about 300 km north of Mumbai.

Japan is to provide about 450 billion yen of the project's total cost for the section, which amounts to 518 billion yen. The largest loan so far was an approximately 260 billion yen loan for the construction of an already-opened subway in New Delhi. The first portion of the loan of 2.6 billion yen is to be granted for a business consultant to work out details of the project plan over the next three years and the remaining amount will be provided in phases.

(10) Japan Atomic Energy Agency estimates number of nuclear power plants to increase to 231, degree of dependence on oil at 0 PERCENT

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
October 17, 2008

The Japan Atomic Energy Agency predicts in its report released yesterday that the ratio of electricity demanded in the nation to all energy would increase from the current 24 PERCENT to 62 PERCENT due to the spread of electric cars and that the degree of dependence on fossil fuel would decrease from the current 75 PERCENT to 28 PERCENT. The agency unveiled its first report, "The vision on nuclear power in 2100," on energy supply and demand in this century and the role of nuclear power plants.

Estimating the population in 2100 at 64.07 million, the report predicts the volume of domestic energy consumption would shrink 42 PERCENT below the level in 2000, given such factors as a decrease in the population and energy-conservation efforts.

The report calculates the ratio of dependence on nuclear fission by light water reactors and other means to all domestic demand in 2100 at 53 PERCENT but the ratio of oil at zero percent. The agency expects the number of nuclear power plants to increase to 231, with 33 fusion reactors, 120 high-temperature gas reactors, and light water reactors. The report says that about five times more high-level waste disposal sites will be needed than the number of those now on the drawing board. A member of the agency said: "The report does not cite suitable construction sites but show technical feasibility."

Meanwhile, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also released its first report the same day, in which it calculated that the generating capacity of nuclear power plants in the world in 2050 would increase 3.8 times more than the current level if all construction plans across the world are implemented.

(11) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:

Political group Jiyu Rengo fails to return 7.2 billion yen in loans from medical corporation

Mainichi:

Cabinet support rate drops 9 points to 36 PERCENT

Yomiuri, Sankei & Tokyo Shimbun:

Financial summit to be held in U.S. next month

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Nikkei:

Corporate job offers to new graduates decrease for first time in five years

Akahata:

Poverty-eradication rally held in Tokyo

(12) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Revamped JICA expected to offer effective aid with loans, grant aid and technical assistance

(2) Disability pension: Amending relevant law urgently needed

Mainichi:

(1) Strictly punish shoplifting

(2) Two major political parties should present visions on what Japan should be in 21st century

Yomiuri:

(1) Education boards should weed out inadequate teachers

(2) Bank transfer scams: Society must strengthen preventive system

Nikkei:

(1) International cooperation imperative to prevent economic crisis in emerging, developing countries

Sankei:

(1) Quickly prepare effective, specific measures to resolve abduction issue

(2) Clarify actual state of inadequate teachers

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Extra economic measures: Pork-barrel largesse eyeing Lower House election unacceptable

(2) NHK must discuss vision and mission as public broadcasting station

Akahata:

(1) Bill extending New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law: Hasty vote outrageous

(13) Prime Minister's schedule, October 17

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

October 18, 2008

07:54

Met Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsumoto at the Kantei.

09:32

Attended a cabinet meeting. MLIT Minister Kaneko stayed on.

Afterward met Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Uruma.

10:00

Attended a Lower House antiterrorism special committee meeting.

12:03

Met at the Kantei Taro Aso No. 8 supporter association chairman Hamanaka and others, followed by LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Hori and Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Yosano.

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13:00

Attended a Lower House antiterrorism special committee meeting.

17:20

Handed letters of appointment to Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy private-sector members, including Toyota Motor Chairman Fujio Cho, in the presence of finance ministers. Afterward, attended a CEF meeting. METI Minister Nikai stayed on.

19:32

Arrived at LDP headquarters.

20:22

Dined at a French restaurant in Yurakucho with his wife Chikako.

23:38

Returned to his private residence in Kamiyama.

Prime Minister's schedule, October 18

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

October 19, 2008

07:30

Took a walk around his private residence in Kamiyama.

09:52

Attended an annual ceremony at the Defense Ministry dedicated to SDF members killed in line of duty.

11:06

Had his hair trimmed at a barber in the Hotel Pacific in Takanawa.

13:10

Visited a tailor and an acupuncture clinic in Kita-aoyama.

16:04

Met at his private residence Foreign Ministry Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director-General Saiki, joined in by Economic Affairs Bureau Director-General Otabe. Afterward had a telephone conversation with Australian Prime Minister Rudd.

18:06

Met the French Cinema Agency Director-General Veronique Cayla at the Toho Cinemas Roppongi Hills, in the presence of METI Minister Nikai. Afterward attended the Tokyo International Cinema Festival opening ceremony.

19:09

Watched the movie Red Cliff with the METI minister, Administrative Reform Minister Amari, Japan Business Federation Chairman Mitarai and others.

21:48

Had drinks with secretary at a bar in Roppongi.

23:37

Returned to his private residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, October 19

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

October 20, 2008

07:27

Took a walk around his private residence in Kamiyama.

10:02

Departed from Defense Ministry on a GSDF helicopter.

10:33

Met at ASDF Hyakuri Base with Defense Minister Hamada, ASDF Chief of Staff Tamogami, ASDF Air Defense Commander Nagata, and base commander Shigehisa. Afterward, attended the ASDF review ceremony.

12:59

Met Hamada, Senior Vice Defense Minister Kitamura, Vice Defense Minister Masuda, SDF Joint Staff Chief Saito, and others.

13:53

Departed from the base on a GSDF helicopter, accompanied by Masuda.

14:47

Met Hamada and Masuda at the Defense Ministry.

15:19

Visited the supermarket Santoku in Nishi-waseda.

15:46

Conversed with a tax driver in front of JR Takadanobaba Station.

16:16

Arrived at his private office in Nagatacho.

18:14

Met his secretary at the Imperial Hotel.

20:50

Met again his secretary at a bar in the hotel.

22:46

Returned to his private residence.

SCHIEFFER